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AUTHOR Fine, Michelle
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ABSTRACT

This essay, written from the point of view of a social researcher with a direct personal involvement in the cases studied, discusses how public schools, as universally accessible moral communities, engage in patterns of systematic exclusion. Through three case studies of public secondary schools in which groups of students have been situated outside the schools' boundaries, this theoretical analysis considers educational ideologies of "merit," "choice," and "tradition" as they have justified moral exclusion. The following schools were involved in the case studies: (1) Comprehensive High School (New York, New York); (2) Dwight Morrow High School (Englewood, New Jersey); and (3) Central High School (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania). The following aspects of each case study are discussed: (1) school characteristics; (2) the exclusion issue; (3) the ideologies used to cover up the exclusion practices; (4) the researcher's role in resolving each exclusion problem; and (5) the decisions concerning the exclusion problem. Across the schools, students were being educated within publicly sanctioned communities of exclusion, sheltered from a rich education of diversity and critique. The analysis contained in this essay challenges scholars and practitioners interested in public education to probe beneath the surface of ostensibly neutral ideologies, and to expose the dynamics of moral exclusion shadowed by some liberal arguments voiced ostensibly for the "common good." A list of 20 references is included. (JS)

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"The Public" in Public Schools: The Social Construction/Constriction of Moral Communities

Michelle Fine, Ph.D.
Associate Professor Psychology in Education
University of Pennsylvania
3700 Walnut Street
Philadelphia, PA 19104

215-898-7019

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BIOGRAPHY

Michelle Fine is an Associate Professor of Psychology in Education at the University of Pennsylvania, and on a half-time leave as a consultant to the Philadelphia Schools Collaborative.

Her more recent works include, "Sexuality, Schooling and Adolescent Females: The Missing Discourse of Desire "(Harvard Educational Review), "Feminist Transformations of/Despite Psychology" (In Crawford and Gentry, Gender and Thought) and a forthcoming book, **Framing** Dropouts: Notes on the Politics of an Urban High School.

ABSTRACT

The question posed in this essay asks, how do public schools, as universally accessible moral communities, engage in patterns of systematic exclusion? Through three case studies of public secondary schools in which groups of students have been situated outside the schools' boundaries, this theoretical analysis pierces educational ideologies of "merit," "choice," and "tradition" as they have justified moral exclusion.

"The Public" in Public Schools: The Social Construction/Constriction of Moral Communities

Michelle Fine, Associate Professor of Psychology in Education,
University of Pennsylvania

Public schools constitute moral communities. While this statement will appear self-evident to some, it surely requires elaboration for others. To the extent that any state offers public education, every child and adolescent in that state is assured legal access, and that access is deemed essential for social and economic participation in democratic society (Ryan, 1982). But because public schooling has become a social good available to all children, we sometimes forget that it is socially distributed, and that decisions about how it should be distributed are ever reconsidered.

Public schooling further fits the criteria for moral communities insofar as political negotiations, if typically unacknowledged, determine who shall enter, remain in, and become excluded from these communities. Policies and practices in schools regularly monitor: who gets what? how much should they get? in what contexts? for how long? and toward what ends? Who is entitled to receive special resources (mentally gifted? special education? tracking? Chapter 1? Headstart?) How can fair allocations of tax resources be determined and sustained (Goetz et.al., 1982)? How should student bodies be distributed by race, class and gender to assure diversity, equity and excellence? (Bastian, et.al., 1986)

In the opening essay of this volume, Opotow (1989) stipulated three criteria for a moral community: collective considerations of fairness; re-allocations of community resources, and personal sacrifices for others. Public schools are organized around fair (equal) access. Community monies are explicitly redistributed for the "common good" (Raskin, 1986). And questions about who needs and who sacrifices in order for educational goods to be distributed justly are routinely negotiated. Therefore, it seems reasonable to conclude that public schools constitute moral communities.

Educational Exclusion for the Common Good

If we begin, then, with the assumption that public schools comprise moral communities, and that the essays within this volume seek to understand from such communities, we must recognize that in the 1980s the question of exclusion from public schools is no longer a simple matter of access. All children can receive public schooling by virtue of the compulsory education laws of the 1920s, the decision in Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka Kansas, and then Brown II, the Bilingual Education Acts, Public Law 94-142 the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, and finally the development of the Harvey Milk School at the Institute for the Protection of Lesbian and Gay Youths in New York City. With access to this moral community established as legitimate and universal, the question of social justice shifts to the progression of exclusion, that is, students' differential experiences and outcomes once inside these communities.

The present essay offers a theoretical analysis of educational ideologies and practices which justify, in the name of the "Common Good," what may actually be seen as exclusion from public education

(Raskin, 1986). Relying on three cases of public high schools, this analysis enables a close reading of how notions of "merit," "choice," and "tradition" have been used to legitimate, and gloss, the exclusion of some students from their public schools. The three cases are quite distinct in the nature of their exclusion and the ideologies surrounding it. My involvements across the three, however, share a common quality. In each case, my work began at the very moment in which students' exclusion was being negotiated.

At Comprehensive High School in New York City, I worked as a qualitative social researcher, engaged in a year long ethnography seeking to understand how an urban comprehensive high school could produce dropouts in rates which exceeded half of any 9th grade cohort. The research was conducted within the school and in the neighboring community where these low income African-American and Latino students resided. This research focused on the institutional production of high school dropouts, a form of exclusion which may be likened to a slow leak from this moral community.

Dwight Morrow High School in Englewood (DMHS) is an integrated high school which serves as the public school for Englewood residents and residents of neighboring Englewoood Cliffs. The Board of Education of Englewood Cliffs, representing a community of primarily white and Asian affluent parents initiated litigation, seeking to send its students to Tenafly High, [(THS) a neighboring public high school] whose student body is almost exclusively white, Asian and affluent. I was brought in to research and then testify about inter-racial and inter-class relations within the two schools. I would also testify about the impact on those left behind at DMHS of the proposed

change in the designated public school for Englewood Cliffs students. The exclusion, which operated through class and race exclusivity at Tenafly High, and which the Englewood Cliffs' Board of Education sought in the litigation, may be likened to a spontaneous break in this moral community, surfacing abruptly through the litigation.

The third case involves an elite, public boys' school, Central High. In the midst of gender - based litigation, I was invited to document the impact of young women's potential attendance at and exclusion from, Central High. Here I studied what may be considered an historically sustained form of exclusion.

My intellectual inquiries originated at the exit doors of Comprehensive High, and in the courtrooms where arguments over inclusion at Dwight Morrow, Tenafly and Central were being litigated. Through the details of these distinct cases, this essay explores the justificatory ideologies and practices of very different kinds of moral exclusion from contemporary public high schools, and the resultant construction of ironically exclusive "public communities."

The Cases: Methods and Analyses

Dropouts from Comprehensive High: A Slow Leak Due to "Academic Inability"

In September 1984, the principal of Comprehensive High welcomed parents to the school with his opening remark:

> Welcome to --- High. We are proud to say that 80% of our graduates go onto college.

I noted the comment in my field notes,with a question in the margins.

The W.T. Grant Foundation had funded this year long

ethnography to study "Why do urban students drop out of high school?" But after three months in the field, an equally compelling question surfaced, "Why do they stay?" At Comprehensive High, a zoned high school in upper Manhattan, the student body was predominantly African-American and Latino, largely low income and working class. In the fall I conducted observations four days per week throughout the school, in the dean's office, guidance office, attendance room, lunchroom and the library. I attended some classes regularly including English, English as a Second Language, Sociology and Hygiene, and sporadically showed up in Bookkeeping, Remedial Reading, Typing, History, Chemistry and Music (for detailed analysis of methods see Fine, 1987).

To complement the rich qualitative information being gathered, I undertook a cohort analysis of over 1400 students who began ninth grade in 1978-79 to estimate the percent who had graduated, dropped out and transferred over six years. Working closely with the Parents Association, the union Chapter Chair, community advocates, and the principal, and interviewing well over 50 recent and long term dropouts, I was able to extract a deep understanding of the dynamics that helped to produce high school dropouts in majority proportions (see Fine, 1987, forthcoming).

A review of the quantitative data may give the reader a sense of the scope of exclusion which powerfully organized this public urban high school. I tracked the 1430 students who formed the 1978-79 ninth grade cohort, and found that only 20% ultimately graduated from this school by June of 1985 (six years later). The 66% dropout rate (some had transferred) stood in stark contrast to the principals'

pronouncement. Those who graduated were, almost entirely, headed for college. Most, however, never made it to the graduation ceremony.

At Comprehensive High, as elsewhere, two ideologies prevailed to explain the high dropout rates: inadequate academic ability and student choice. But the ethnography revealed that low income adolescents leave high school for a myriad of reasons. Some left to care for families: "My momma has lupus, and I must care for her, my sisters and brothers. Later for me."

Others doubted the taken-for-granted (middle class) linear relation between a high school diploma and future economic security: "Reason I stay in school is 'cause every morning I see this bum sleeping by the subway and I think 'not me' but then I think, 'Bet he has a high school diploma." Still others challenged the traditional curriculum which severed what they knew historically, culturally and personally, from what was presented as truth (Delpit, 1988; Fine, 1987) --

November 2, English class. White female teacher in discussion with students about a recent shooting that occurred outside the school.

TEACHER: Can you imagine any circumstances under which killing would be justified?

OPAL: If a guy tries to beat up my mother, I'd kill him.

TEACHER: Well it's not likely that your mother would be beat up. She would have to be in a fight with someone she knew.

ALICIA: Shit, Missy, what city you live in?

Many felt coerced to leave, told by administrators that they had been absent too often, or that they couldn't return after having been suspended. A student's mother reported:

> "When they discharged my son I thought it was over, until the guidance counselor told me that the Dean couldn't do it [i.e. legally keep her son out of school.] But she told me not to tell them that she told me. I knew it was a cover-up then."

Finally, there were those whom one might say willfully dropped out, that is, "by choice." Throughout September these students entered the attendance office, perhaps six per morning, saying, "I'm seventeen and I want to drop out." Appropriate papers were removed from the office desk, students were asked to sign and get a parent/guardian to co-sign. Given a sheet of paper listing outreach centers and GED programs, these adolescents were discharged into a world void of the opportunities they imagined available. None was told that New York State has the lowest national GED pass rate at 48.5% percent; none was told that it is difficult to get into military service without a diploma (as many planned to do), and that those who are accepted by the military have an extremely high rate of less than honorable discharge; and none was told that the private business schools that many planned to enroll in had reputations of unethical recruitment practices, dishonest promises and 70% dropout rates. One dean explained to me,

> In a system like this you need boundaries. I can't worry about kids after they're gone. It's tough enough while they are here. My job is like the pilot on a hijacked plane; I have to throw off the hijackers.

Two-thirds of the students were posed as the alleged hijackers. Passengers constituted only 20% of the school. (See quantitative and qualitative analyses Fine, 1987; Fine, forthcoming).

The story from Comprehensive High reflects an exclusion that may be cast as a slow leak from this moral community. While those with poor academic histories left soon and predictably early, the bodies, voices and spirits of most low income adolescents who were ever in attendance at Central High School eventually exitted prior to graduation. They exitted in ways that were institutionalized, invisible, and accepted as if inevitable. We are left with the question, would the public accept "lack of ability" or students' "personal choice" as sound justifications if two-thirds of a white, middle class student body disappeared prior to graduation? Or would we reject these rationalizations and be outraged by such an educational exclusion?

Dwight Morrow and Tenafly High Schools : Spontaneous Break For "Parental Choice"

The case of Board of Education of the Borough of Englewood Cliffs v. Board of Education of the City of Englewood v. Board of Education of the Borough of Tenafly raises another set of questions about educational exclusion through litigation brought by the Board of Education of the Borough of Englewood Cliffs, representing primarily white and Asian, affluent parents seeking out of an integrated public high school. This case positioned demands for parental choice squarely against demands for racial and class equity.

In 1987, three contiguous public school districts were involved in litigation over where students from Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey should attend public high school. A community too small in

population to warrant its own high school, Englewood Cliffs sent its adolescents to a neighboring public high school. At the time of the litigation, the official sending-receiving relationship was with Englewood City, a community integrated by race, ethnicity and social class. The one public high school in Englewood City, Dwight Morrow High School, had a student body which was racially integrated and cross-class, including approximately 20% low income, 66% Black, 18% Latino, 12% white and 4% Asian.

The Board of Education of the Borough of Englewood Cliffs was suing to sever its sending-receiving relationship with Englewood City, arguing that the Cliffs parents should be allowed instead to send their secondary students to Tenafly High School, located in a neighboring, predominantly white and affluent community, rich in resources and impressive in mean standardized test scores. The student body at T.H.S. was 80% White, 18% Asian, 1% Black and 1% Hispanic, with virtually no low income students. Over the prior five years Tenafly High School had already accepted large numbers of students from Englewood Cliffs on a private tuition basis. At the time of the litigation, a full 12% of Tenafly High School students were paying $5480 per year to attend this public high school, and over the prior five years, eighty two percent of them had come from either Englewood or Englewood Cliffs.

The Board of Education of Englewood City sought to: 1) retain the sending-receiving relationship between Englewood Cliffs and Englewood City 2) impose an injunction against Tenafly High School's private tuition policy, and 3) regionalize the three districts. In the words of the attorneys for Englewood City:

...Without question, regionalization is necessary to root out racial segregation and to advance the objectives of integration in all three districts...If all Cliffs and some Englewood students are welcome to cross the border to receive their education at THS (Tenafly High School) - not only welcome, but so desired that the Tenafly Board has fought to avoid injunction - why not others? Why not those who are not affluent and cannot afford tuition? Why not those who are not the brightest and the best, but are average kids who can be motivated to succeed? Why not special education children? Why not more blacks and more Hispanics? Why not regionalization? (Mytelka & Tractenberg, 1987).

The Board of Education of Englewood Cliffs argued that the educational quality at Dwight Morrow High School was inferior, and that the principle of parental choice should enable parents to opt out of Dwight Morrow High School. From the point of view of Englewood City, however, these notions of "quality" and "choice" were thinly veiled strategies to facilitate racial prejudice and white flight. "Quality" was a proxy for racial and class segregation, whereas "choice" was being espoused for predominantly wealthy, white and Asian parents. A decision to sever, Englewood argued, would provoke an impression in Englewood of poor educational quality despite evidence to the contrary, and would facilitate a community-wide exodus of middle class parents across race/ethnic groups from Dwight Morrow High School, eroding the race and class integration of the school and undermining state interests in educational equity and quality through diversity.

I was invited by the Board of Education of Englewood City to study the social, academic and psychological climate surrounding integration at Dwight Morrow High School, to investigate how African-American, white, Latino and Asian-American students viewed their school and the litigation, and to ask how they would have felt if the Englewood Cliffs students were permitted to leave. I interviewed a small sample of young women and men at Tenafly High School to ascertain their views of race relations, the litigation and the consequences should Englewood Cliffs' petition prevail. I served as an expert witness for Englewood City.

Over the course of the year I conducted in-depth observations, at Dwight Morrow, held extensive interviews with administrators, faculty, over 20 students, both individually and in groups, and interviewed eight students individually at Tenafly High School. Students ranged racially, ethnically and by social class. Some were selected because of their active involvement in school activities. Others were chosen randomly.

The arguments posed by the lawyers were echoed by the interviewed students. Students at Dwight Morrow spoke generously, and proudly, of the virtues of racial and class integration. The interviews conducted with the students from Tenafly High School, in contrast, reflected what seemed to be the chilling effects of an elite, segregated public education.

Only one of the Tenafly students indicated any concern for the social and racial issues raised by the lawsuit. A young Asian boy stated simply, "It does seem like discrimination." The remaining seven assured me that:

> "You should do what the majority wants and the majority from the Cliffs want to come here."
>
> "I don't want to attend school with kids who wear torn clothes."
>
> "You get people from rich society here. I'd rather hang out with kids with money than kids who are totally poor."

> "They [the black students at Dwight Morrow] can pay to come here also. If Blacks can't afford it, they should go to school with Blacks. You are out for yourself."
>
> "My parents pay taxes and so I deserve the best education possible."
>
> "Never thought about it."
>
> "Tenafly is like a private school; people dress nice and come from good homes."

The interviews from Tenafly were truly sobering. In the short duration of our time together, these students expressed positions that displayed a candid disregard for persons less fortunate, or merely different, than they. In my expert report, I discussed these interviews as follows:

> The extent to which these students, privileged by social class and race, take for granted their "entitlement" and perceive no social consequence in having a basically black high school and basically white high school separated by only a few miles, suggests the dramatic extent to which segregation reinforces, in the minds of white students, a sense of inherent superiority and the justice of unjust outcomes. (Fine Expert Report, June 1987).

I concluded that these Tenafly students were taught in a segregated context, denied the thorough and efficient education that New Jersey law requires, socially miseducated and deprived of the diverse social and academic experiences available to students at Dwight Morrow High.

The litigating Board of Education from Englewood Cliffs was asking for the creation of an educational community organized through class and racial exclusion, and asking that this be sanctioned by the state. The Board sought this form of education partially through the popular language of "parental choice." But like notions of "inadequate academic ability" and "student choice" at Comprehensive High, here "parental choice" to leave Dwight Morrow High School and attend Tenafly embodied a piece of social ideology which argued for, at the same time that it obscured, educational exclusion.

Both the New Jersey State Commissioner of Education and the presiding Administrative Law Judge found the arguments of Englewood Cliffs uncompelling. They rejected the "poor quality" argument, determined that Dwight Morrow High School provides quality education, and found that a change to the homogeneous Tenafly High School would deprive Englewood Cliffs students of the enriching educational benefits of diversity. The Commissioner determined that Englewood Cliffs' relationship with Dwight Morrow High School would not be severed, and that Tenafly would be forbidden to accept students from Englewood and Englewood Cliffs as private tuition students. Regionalization, however, was denied. All parties are now appealing the decision.

While parental choice and constant parental search for educational quality need not be incompatible with educational equity (Bastian, 1989), the rhetoric of choice typically enters educational discourse when a privileged group seeks refuge from one public context, and entrance into another, more elite context. From the perspective of the Englewood Cliffs Board, and in the attitudes that seemed to permeate Tenafly High School, exclusion hovered through erroneous assertions of quality and demands for parental choice.

Central High School: Historically Sustained Exclusion to Preserve "Tradition"

In late 1984, progressive men from across Philadelphia called to beg me not to testify on behalf of gender integration of Central High School.

> Oh no, not Central. It's a great school. A great tradition. Don't let it fall. It will be ruined.
>
> I grew suspect rather quickly. The voice of Zero Mostel echoed repeatedly: "TRADITION!" I asked myself, "whose?"

In Elizabeth Newberg, Pauline King and Jessica Bonn v. the Board of Public Education, School District of Philadelphia, three adolescent women sued for access to Central High School, the most prestigious high school in Philadelphia. Central High scored the highest mean test scores in the City, prided itself with the finest resources and private endowment, and enjoys, to this day, a national reputation as one of the top public schools in the country. Because Central and Girls High School comprised the only elite academic public high schools in the City, students who attended came from across the city.

The three young women who initiated the suit had been students at Girls High (two were still there at the time of the litigation). With budding feminist sensibilities, they felt entitled to "attend the best school in the city," they believed that they deserved access to Central and argued that a public institution which stood for exclusion on the basis of gender was inherently discriminatory. The defense for preserving Central High as single-sex stood, in contrast, firmly on the mantle of tradition. Young women were excluded justifiably because a long and proud Philadelphia custom called for this institution to remain one in which young men could socialize with other young men without the "distractions" of young women.

The rhetoric of tradition was well managed. One third of the judges in Philadelphia were alleged to be graduates of Central High School. Many graduates swore on the stand to Central's academic history of excellence, and that this excellence was inseparably keyed to being an all male school. Adult men testified that they still carried Central High School cards in their wallets, displayed Central High School bachelor's degree diplomas on their office walls, and reiterated with romance and misty eyes their days as young boys at Central.

My involvement with this school came in two waves. In 1984 I was invited to testify about the value of gender integration, and the social and academic impact of sustaining an exclusively male public high school. In preparation, I interviewed the three young women extensively, spoke with administrators at Central High and read thoroughly the literatures on gender segregation and integration in secondary school. The second wave of involvement with Central High came four years later, from my supervision of a dissertation by Arlene Holtz who studied the long term impact of the lawsuit on Central's school climate and gender relations.

In 1984, after intensive interviews with the young women, I concluded that the judicial sanctioning of an exclusively male public high school could reinforce in the minds of the general public, the young men at the school, and young women and men across the city, that males were essentially superior. It could legitimate sex-based discrimination and seemingly substantiate popular beliefs about biological differences between male and female educational capabilities. The trial ended with the judge (who was, by the way, not a graduate of Central High) ruling in favor of the plaintiffs. The graduating class of 1985 was therefore the last to be all male. The President of the Alumni Association, in his address to this group, is quoted by Holtz as saying:

> This brings to an end a tradition that has lasted almost 150 years. We of the Alumni Association think that this is just one of the traditions that has made Central High School absolutely the finest high school in America. (Woodall, 1985, pp. aB,4B: cited in Holtz, 1989, p.16).

And the class sponsor concluded his remarks in kind:

> So in the future when we should meet,
> Let us remember the last of the elite.

To this day, Central's nationally reputed archive, the official chronicle of the institution's history, remains silent on the litigation. There is no evidence of the young women's victory. According to Holtz (1989), many young women have seemingly been accepted by the young men and some faculty at Central, by disparaging the young women students attending school next door -- at Girls High. And so this tradition of exclusion prevails, if updated.

How Ideologies Facilitate and Obscure Exclusion

In contexts of universal access such as public education, moral exclusion occurs routinely, occluded by social ideologies. Such ideologies rationalize excluding practices and justify existing boundaries. Even more intimately, however, they seem to comfort those individuals represented as insiders.

Critical theorist Catherine Belsley defines social ideology as:

> real in that it is the way in which people really live their relationship to the social relations which govern their conditions of existence, but imaginary in that it discourages a full understanding of these conditions of existence and the ways in which people are socially constituted within them...(emphasis added, 1986, p.46)

The ideologies surrounding school exclusion -- "academic inability" at Comprehensive High, "parental choice" to attend Tenafly, and "tradition" at Central High -- provided coherence and meaning to the institutions and individuals which spawned them. But these ideologies also mapped the exiling of some, and made it seem as if their absence were simply for the collective best. (Pratt, 1988).

At Comprehensive High, students once included as community members were ushered out with the crisp language of merit. Over time two-thirds of the students were transformed into a threat to the well being of those who remained. And so they were escorted out. Likewise, through the language of choice, the Englewood Cliffs Board of Education argued that parents should be able to choose their public schools, and their children should be offered what they erroneously perceived to be "the best," a school segregated by race and class. Dwight Morrow was cast as if it were a threat to their children's intellectual growth, and students from Dwight Morrow High School, "with torn clothes," were viewed as a similar threat. By receiving a class and racially segregated education, elite children would presumably serve the Common Good most effectively.

Finally, the ideology of tradition also resonated intimately with the nostalgic image of a Common Good. Couched in the language of history, order, and "the way things have always been", tradition comforted. When the tradition of male bonding at Central High was brought under legal scrutiny, there were public pronouncements that the school would be destroyed, male students would be distracted, and a long standing tradition of excellence would be decayed. The Common Good could presumably be salvaged only if the school remained all male.

When The Common Good Is Challenged

The image of a single Common Good unravels once the diverse needs and entitlements of those placed outside the "deserving" community are revealed. In these three cases, once notions of tradition, male bonding, natural academic abilities, and quality education were stripped of their seeming neutrality they revealed a set of educational contexts which had survived largely through slow, spontaneous, or sustained exclusion. Upon close examination, each of these three schools may have salvaged its internal meaning and identity by constructing partial and perverse images of Discarded Others. For Comprehensive High it was dropouts; for Englewood Cliffs and Tenafly High School, low income students and students of color; and at Central, young women. In opposition to these Discarded Others, the students, faculty and parents who "belonged" enjoyed a righteous sense of their collective selves. They were simply smarter, classier, or more masculine.

But once the Other emerged as a critical and deserving subject (through research and/or litigation), the rationalizations for the exclusive community grew fragile. At these points, the illicit relationship between moral communities and moral exclusion was rendered visible: much of what held the insiders together was the group who remained hostage - on the outside.

The Consequences of Moral Exclusion in Public Education

So what's the moral of this story about moral communities? The most frightening position I can conjure is that public schools claim universal inclusion, invent highly exclusive boundaries to control who's actually in and out, and then represent these boundaries as if protective of the Common Good. While the notions of merit, choice and tradition may appear to be liberal, benign ideologies of public schooling, they actually gloss moral exclusion, bear sweeping consequence for those excluded, and threaten even those who are ostensibly protected.

Turning to the "protected," we see young women and men who graduated from Comprehensive High and witnessed 60% of their peers drop out or be pushed out, while no one protested. Those at Tenafly suffered socially deficient education, and were trained to believe that they deserved, simply by virtue of race and class privilege, an excluding school. And young men at Central High School long recognized that female students were being denied entrance into the finest school in the city of Philadelphia simply because they were young women. Across the three schools, students were being educated within publicly sanctioned communities of exclusion, sheltered from a rich education of diversity and critique. But even worse, the schools taught these young women and men to see public exclusion as natural, justifiable, and perhaps even necessary for the Common Good. The analysis posed in this essay challenges scholars and practitioners interested in public education to probe beneath the surface of ostensibly neutral (even "progressive") ideologies, and to expose the dynamics of moral exclusion shadowed by some liberal arguments voiced ostensibly for the Common Good.

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